HABS No. WI-292

MANCHESTER'S DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING 2 E. Mifflin Street Madison,
Dane County Wisconsin

HARS W/G 13-177 AD,

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P. O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY MANCHESTER'S DEPARTMENT STORE HABS NO. WI-292

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Location:

2 East Mifflin Street (north corner of Mifflin Street and Wisconsin Avenue), City of Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin. U.S.G.S. Madison West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone

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16/304840E/4771780N

Present Owner:

Hovde Development Corporation c/o First Federal Savings

202 State Street Madison, WI 53703

Present Use:

Vacant, scheduled for demolition, Spring, 1985.

Significance:

The City of Madison's "largest retail building" at the time of its opening, the Manchester's Department Store building is significant as the home of the major

retail business during a time of growth and prosperity

for the city (Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930). The building is a fine local example of the Art Deco style, a style that was popular in Madison for commercial buildings constructed in the 1920's and

1930's.

PART I - HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

- 1. Date of Erection: 1929-1930 (Building Permit, Dec. 28, 1929; tax assessment records; Capital Times, Sept. 28, 1930 and Sept. 30, 1930).
- 2. Architect: The building was designed by Holabird and Root of Chicago. The prominent Madison architectural firm, Law, Law and Potter did the working drawings (Building Permit, Dec. 28, 1929; A Monograph of the Works of Law, Law and Potter, 1937; interview With James Potter, Mar. 22, 1985; Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930). The Holabird and Root firm was renowned for their very modern designs, several fine examples of which remain in Wisconsin. The U. S. Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, the A. O. Smith Office building in Milwaukee, and the Racine County Courthouse in Racine are three well-known Holabird and Root designs. The Manchester's Building is not a representative or fine example of Holabird and Root's work.

The exterior design of the Manchester's Building bears close similarities to Law, Law and Potter designs of the same era. firm of Law, Law and Potter was established by James and Edward Law in 1916. Ellis Potter became a partner in 1925. In the 1920's the firm was Madison's most prominent and successful architectural office. A recent intensive survey of the historic buildings in Madison catalogued 38 pre-World War 11 non-residential buildings designed by the firm which remain. These include some of the largest and most architecturally significant buildings in downtown Madison. Two built in the modern style (the term used in Madison in the 1920's and 1930's for the Art Oeco) were the Tenney Building (110 East Main Street, built in 1928) and the Wisconsin Power and Light Building and Union Bus Station (123 West Washington Avenue, built in 1928). Probably the finest example of the firm's work in the modern style is the Holstein-Friesian Assn. of America Building (448 West Washington Avenue, built in 1930), a jewel of classical composition with an Art Deco cornice, spandrel panels and grilles. This building was restored in 1984.

3. Original and Subsequent Owners: Current legal description: All of Lots 1 and 2, the northwest 7 feet of the northeast 54 feet of Lot 3 and the west 78 feet of Lots 3 and 4, Block 90, Original Plat, City of Madison.

The main block of the building constructed in 1929-1930 and the land under it were owned by the Harry S. Manchester Company, Inc., from the date of construction of the building until 1981.

The second parcel acquired was the land to the northwest at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and East Dayton Street (see map). This property, which previously had been the site of the First Unitarian Society meeting house, was purchased by the Manchester Co. in 1945 from the First Unitarian Society.

The third parcel acquired was the Montague building, adjoining the original structure to its northeast, at 8-12 East Mifflin Street. The Montague building was built in 1930 for the Capitol Square Realty Co., which leased the building to the Manchester Co. in 1945. Manchester's finally purchased the property in 1974. In 1978 this parcel was sold to the T. A. Chapman Co., the Milwaukee department store chain that operated the Manchester's store for a short time.

In 1981 the entire site composed of these three parcels was sold by Manchester's and the T. A. Chapman Co. to the Clement Construction Co. of Milwaukee. Shortly thereafter, Clement Construction sold the three parcels to the Hovde Development Corp. on land contract. In 1982 the Hovde firm acquired title to the property. The firm is the current owner of the property (tract index, Oane County Register of Deeds; tax assessment records).

4. Builders, Suppliers:

a. Builder: J. H. Findorff and Son (A Monograph; Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930). John H. Findorff was born near Madison in the Town of Middleton where he learned the carpentry trade. In 1885 he came to Madison to work on construction of the old Dane County Courthouse.

In 1890 he joined the Starck Manufacturing Co., which made sash, doors and blinds. When Starck and his partner died, Findorff became president of the company. Around 1904 he moved the business into an old flour mill at 601 West Wilson Street and renamed the company after himself. 1909 the mill was destroyed by fire. Findorff did not have insurance, so the fire was devastating but he managed to build a new structure and continued his operations. In 1917 the firm began general contracting. Findorff's son, Milton, became partner in the firm in 1921. By 1922, they had 175 employees (Wisconsin State Journal, Dec. 31, 1922). Findorff's firm built many of Madison's largest buildings. including the Masonic Temple, the Hotel Edgewater, the Wisconsin Power and Light building, several schools, hospitals, and university buildings ("Meet Madison Industry, Progress, Mar., 1955). It continues today as one of the largest building contractors in Madison. John Findorff served as the Eighth Ward Alderman in 1904, was a director of the Madison Drug Co., and was president of the Wisconsin Master Builders' Association. He died in 1948 at the age of 81.

Harry S. Manchester was very pleased with the work that Findorff and Son did on the Manchester building. Manchester noted that the Findorff firm had worked very economically because it maintained its own lumber yard and millwork plant. At the opening of the building, he stated that "the builders have achieved unusually attractive results without elaborateness or extravagance. . .they have given Madison a structure which is a credit to the prominent location it occupies directly across from the State Capitol, and simultaneously they have kept our investment down. . "(Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 30, 1930).

b. Suppliers:

Plumbing Contractor: W. J. Hyland Plumbing Co. (Building Permit, Feb. 12, 1930, Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930).

Plumbing Equipment: Kohler of Kohler, Wisconsin (A Monograph).

Electrical Contractor: Schaub-Bradford Electric Co., Madison (Building Permit, Nov. 3, 1930; A Monograph).

Structural Steel, Ornamental Iron and Miscellaneous Metalwork: Kupfer Foundry Co., Madison (Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930).

Stonework: Bay View Stone Co., Madison (Capital Times, Sept. 28, 1930).

Excavation: Quinn Construction Company, Madison (Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930).

Elevators: Otis Elevator Co. (Building Permit, May 1, 1930).

Tilework: U. J. Neider, Madison (Capital Times, Sept. 28, 1930).

Terrazzo Floors: Lumina Terrazzo and Tile Co., Inc., Madison (A Monograph).

Plaster: John Ahl and Co., Madison (A Monograph; Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930).

Painting and Oecorating: J. H. Tullis, Madison ($\underline{\underline{A}}$ Monograph).

5. Original Plans and Contruction: The original pencil drawings and blueprints are in the possession of Potter, Lawson and Pawlowsky, Madison, the successor firm to Law, Law and Potter. Oetailed construction drawings probably no longer exist.

According to the Building Permit, the Manchester's Building cost \$300,000 to construct. The original exterior appearance of the Manchester's Building was very like its appearance today. The only major changes are noted in Item A.6. below. The original interior was described by the Wisconsin State Journal (Sept. 28, 1930) in detail at the time of the store's opening (please see photocopy of article attached).

6. Alterations and Additions:

1933: Part of the fourth floor at the rear of the building was completed, Law, Law and Potter, Architects (Building Permit, Sept. 23, 1933).

1936: Doorway cut through fire wall to connect Manchester and Montague Buildings at second floor level (Building Permit, Jan. 9, 1936).

1946: \$350,000 three-story rear addition constructed of steel frame and concrete with a brick and stone exterior and a poured concrete foundation, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Chicago, Architects (Building Permit, Feb. 25, 1946).

1946: Department store operations expanded into first floor of Montague Building (city directories, letter from Arnold and O'Sheridan to Graven Associates, Dec. 8, 1980).

Unknown Date (Pre-1959): Front facade rebuilt on Montague Building to make second floor a series of plate glass windows.

1965: Wisconsin Avenue entrance closed with materials to match rest of facade, canopy removed. New entrance added in rear addition (Building Permit, July 22, 1965).

1974: Windows in rear addition blocked up and entire wall faced with pebble textured insulated material. Pebbled wall also added to second story of Montague Building and band added above display windows of original building with 30" high illuminated letters (Building Permit, Apr. 1B, 1974).

Unknown Date: Fourth floor added over part of 1946 rear addition.

Unknown Date: Mirror glass installed in place of clear glass in second through fourth floor windows.

B. Historical Content

The Manchester's Building was constructed in 1929-1930 to house the "largest department store" in the City of Madison (Capital Times, Sept. 28, 1930). The founder of the establishment, Harry S. Manchester, was born in Kewaunee, Illinois in 186B. At the age of 18, he began his career in the retail business in a Kewaunee store doing odd jobs. Eventually he was promoted to buyer, and in his contacts with big-city jobbers he developed a desire to go farther in the business than he could get in Kewaunee. Although he worked in several department stores around the country in the next few years, he was most successful in his positions in Marshall Field's in Chicago. In that store, he rose to become manager of all of the ready-to-wear departments and was awarded for his efforts by receiving company stock. When his son, Morgan, was about to graduate from college, Manchester decided to buy a dry goods store in Madison so that he and his son could work together. In 1921, Manchester purchased Keely and Neckerman, a successful 31-year old firm, which in that year employed 80 people and did \$700,000 worth of business annually.

For nine years, Manchester and his son continued running the dry goods store at 15-17 North Pinckney Street (demolished ca. 1970). At that time, the store specialized in fine women's apparel, reasonably priced dress accessories, yard goods, linens, toys and rugs, with a beauty parlor and bobby shoppe (a hair cutting shop for young women and girls featuring the trendy, short hair cuts). Under the Manchesters' leadership, the establishment thrived so that by 1930, just before the store moved into its new home, the business employed 130 people with 70 more added during the holiday season and did \$1,250,000 worth of business annually (Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930).

When the doors of the new store were thrown open, Mayor Schmedemann said that the new building placed "Madison's shopping center in a class with merchandising centers in Chicago and the East" (Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 30, 1930). Local newspapers said it was "probably the outstanding department store building of any city in America comparable with Madison's size" (Capital Times, Sept. 28, 1930). The move was also hailed from an economic standpoint. The Wisconsin State Journal (Sept. 28, 1930) noted that the expanded operation would "make a sizeable contribution to the solution of the employement problem in Madison, and to the city's population growth as well". It noted that the staff had been increased 15% in anticipation of the move and that new buyers and department managers had moved to Madison with their families.

Eight years later, in 1938 when Harry S. Manchester died, the firm employed 300 people with an additional 300 seasonal workers. In 1937, it did \$1,900,000 worth of business (Capital Times, July 15, 1938).

Morgan Manchester took over as president of the corporation after his father's death. In the 1950's an east side branch was established in Madison's first suburban shopping center, which was developed by the Manchester family. Later, with Morgan's son, H. S. Manchester II, at the helm, two stores were added in shopping centers on the west side. Shortly thereafter, downtown Madison's position as a major retail center in the region started rapidly eroding. In 1978 a Milwaukee department store chain bought the Manchester's firm, and in 1981 the downtown store was closed.

PART II - ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural Character: The original Manchester's Department Store Building is a four-story flat-roofed structure in the style known in Madison at the time as "modern". The essential boxiness of the structure is relieved by its elegant proportions and by the slight indentation of the central bays, which are trimmed with decorative iron spandrel panels between floors and carved limestone panels above the fourth floor windows. The cornice frieze is made up of limestone blocks carved in a repeating pattern. Each decorative panel is shallow in relief. The foliate and floral designs are symmetrical around a central axis and are fine local examples of the stylization of classical motifs popular for Art Deco ornament.
- Condition of Fabric: The building has been vacant since 1981.
 Mechanical systems are irreparable due to frozen and leaking pipes
 and obsolescence. The exterior is in good condition with some
 areas of peeling paint.

B. Description of Exterior

- 1. Overall Dimensions: The original Manchester's Building is 7B' along Mifflin Street and 125' deep along Wisconsin Avenue (Building Permit). The Mifflin Street side is five bays wide, and the Wisconsin Avenue side is divided into seven bays. The Montague Building is 54'3" wide and 125' deep (Building Permit, May 15, 1930). The 1946 rear addition is 132' wide and 73' deep (Building Permit). The Manchester's Building is four stories high, with a basement and a service penthouse. The Montague Building is two stories high with basement, and the rear addition is three stories high with basement and a penthouse.
- 2. Foundations: The foundations on all three buildings are poured concrete (Building Permits).
- 3. Walls: The walls on the original section are 12" tile curtain walls faced with smooth limestone veneer on the two street facades. Polished black granite trims the two main facades below the display windows. In the central three bays on the Mifflin Street facade and the central five bays on the Wisconsin Avenue side, ornamental iron panels with an Art Deco design in shallow relief decorate the spandrels between the second and third and third and fourth floor windows. The other two faces of the building are brick. The Montague Building originally had a stone exterior; the 1946 rear addition also had a stone and brick exterior over 12" tile curtain walls (Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1942 updated to the present).

4. Structural Systems and Framing: The original Manchester's Building has a steel-reinforced concrete frame with concrete floors and roof. The penthouse has a steel roof. The Montague Building has concrete floors on steel joists with a wood roof. The rear addition has a steel frame with concrete floors and roof (Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1942 updated to the present).

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and Doors: The original exterior entrances each contained four wooden doors with large panes of glass and brass handle bars. The doors were replaced with glass doors ca. 1974. A metal and glass canopy hangs from chains over the Mifflin Street entrance. An identical canopy over the Wisconsin Avenue entrance was removed, probably in 1965.
- b. Windows: The first floor street facades feature large rectangular plate glass display windows, four on the Mifflin Street side and six on the Wisconsin Avenue side (seven, after the Wisconsin Avenue entrance was removed). On either side of the Mifflin Street entrance are smaller display windows with curved tops. Similar windows flanked the Wisconsin Avenue entrance and are also located between the first and second large display windows on either side of that entrance. The windows on the upper floors are large Chicago-style windows with steel mullions. The lower side sash open outward from the sides.
- 6. Roof Shape: All roofs are flat with pitch and gravel roofing.

C. Description of Interior

- 1. Floor Plans: All floors were essentially open display areas with square pier supports. Partitions in certain areas were relocated many times through the years (please see representative floor plan in photo documentation). The interior underwent many remodellings through the years, including extensive modernizations in 1946 and 1974 ("Appraisal of the Manchester Building...," 1980). Therefore, very little of the original fabric remains.
- 2. Stairways: The main stairway, which is original, is utilitarian in design with terrazzo steps, simple wrought iron railings and thin, vaguely Art Deco metal newel posts. Originally, two manually operated Otis elevators served passengers and one was used for freight (Building Permits). The elevators were reconditioned several times.
- 3. Flooring: (See supplementary description from Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930) All floors are now carpeted.

4. Hardware: Door and elevator hardware were solid brass. The doorknobs were decorated with foliate designs. The brass hardware has been removed from the building.

D. Site

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Manchester's Building has two main facades. The Mifflin Street side faces the Capitol Square to the southeast; the Wisconsin Avenue side faces southwest. The northwest side of Mifflin Street is lined with commercial and office buildings which face onto the sloping lawn of the Beaux-Arts State Capitol Building. Across Wisconsin Avenue from Manchester's is a 1950's commercial building and a recently constructed hotel. Further to the north are churches, a school, a medical clinic and residences.

PART III - SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings

Original pencil tracings and blueprints are in the possession of the architectural firm of Potter, Lawson and Pawlowsky, Madison, Wisconsin. Detailed construction drawings probably no longer exist.

B. Early Views

- 1. A Monograph of the Work of Law, Law and Potter, 1937, contains a fine photograph of the building exterior.
- 2. "Selections from the Recent Work of Law, Law and Potter", 1941, also contains a good photograph of the building exterior.
- 3. Several photographs of the building and its environs from various eras are located in the Madison Scrapbooks, Iconography Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

C. Interviews

- 1. Interview with Jane Graff, researcher for the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation, Mar. 5, 1985.
- 2. Interview with James Potter, FAIA, son of Ellis Potter, principal of Law, Law and Potter, Mar. 22, 1985.

D. Bibliography

- Primary and Unpublished Sources:
 - a. "Appraisal of the Manchester Building for First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Madison", Mid-America Appraisal Corporation, 1980, copy in the possession of the City of Madison Department of Planning and Development.

- b. Building Permit files, City of Madison, Department of Planning and Development.
- c. City directories for the City of Madison.
- d. Letter, Arnold and O'Sheridan to Graven Associates, Dec. 8, 1980, copy in the possession of the City of Madison Department of Planning and Development.
- e. Sanborn-Perris Maps for the City of Madison, 1942 and 1942 updated.
- f. Tax assessment records for the City of Madison, Department of Planning and Development.
- g. Tract Index, Dane County Register of Deeds.
- 2. Secondary and Published Sources:
 - a. "Centennial Edition", <u>Wisconsin State Journal</u>, 1939, Sec. II., P. 10.
 - b. "Contractor, Once Farm Boy, Has Remarkable Record Here", Wisconsin State Journal, Dec. 31, 1922 (article about John Findorff).
 - c. "Cut Costs of New Store by Extra Space", <u>Capital Times</u>, Sept. 28, 1930.
 - d. "Expect 20,000 at Formal Opening of Manchester's New Store on Tuesday", Capital Times, Sept. 28, 1930.
 - e. "First Floor of New Manchester Store", <u>Wisconsin State</u>
 <u>Journal</u>, Sept. 28, 1930.
 - f. "Half Million Sale Clears Away Stock", Capital Times, Sept. 28, 1930.
 - g. "Harry S. Manchester, Inc. Announces the Formal Opening..." adv. in Capital Times, Sept. 28, 1930.
 - h. "Harry S. Manchester, Merchant, Dies at 70", Wisconsin State Journal, July 15, 1938.
 - i. "Harry S. Manchester, Owner of Department Store, Is Dead, Age 70", Capital Times, July 15, 1938.
 - j. "Holabird and Root, Masters of Design", Pencil Points, Feb., 1938, pp. 65-93.
 - k. "Hundreds at Opening of Manchester Store", <u>Wisconsin State</u>
 <u>Journal</u>, Sept. 30, 1930.

- "Madison Past and Present", Anniversary Edition of the Wisconsin State Journal, Madison, 1902.
- m. "Manchester Pays Tribute to Findorffs, Store's Contractors", Wisconsin State Journal, sept. 28, 1930.
- n. "Manchester's New Fixtures Well Planned", <u>Capital Times</u>, Sept. 28, 1930.
- o. "Manchester's New Store to Open Tuesday", <u>Wisconsin State</u> Journal, Sept. 28, 1930.
- p. "Manchester's Slated for Demolition...", Update, newsletter of the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation, Feb., 1985.
- q. "Mayor Will Give Talk at 9:30 A.M., Formal Dedication", Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930.
- r. "Meet Madison Industry", Progress, bulletin of the Madison Chamber of Commerce, Mar., 1955, p. 5 (article about Findorff and Son).
- s. Miscellaneous advertisements in <u>Capital Times</u>, Sept. 28, 1930.
- t. Miscellaneous advertisements in <u>Wisconsin State Journal</u>, Sept. 28, 1930.
- u. A Monograph of the Work of Law, Law and Potter, Architects, New York: Architectural Catalog Co., 1937.
- v. "New Store Arranged for Utmost Convenience", Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930.
- w. "New Store Gives Work to Jobless", Capital Times, Sept. 28, 1930.
- x. "Operating Costs to be Much Less", <u>Wisconsin State Journal</u>, Sept. 28, 1930.
- y. "Selections from the Recent Work of Law, Law and Potter", Architecture and Design, Nov., 1941.
- z. "Showcases Never Become Dingy", <u>Wisconsin State Journal</u>, Sept. 28, 1930.
- aa. "Thousands Present at Manchester Dedication", Capital Times, Sept. 30, 1930.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

Members of the Manchester family no doubt have much more information on the history of the firm. However, family members have shown little interest in discussing their past with Ms. Jane Graff of the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation and have been generally uncooperative.

F. Supplemental Information

At the end of this report are two supplements:

- 1. A sketch map showing the location of the Manchester's Building, the rear addition, and the Montague Building on Block 90.
- 2. A photocopy of the article, "New Store Arranged for Utmost Convenience", Wisconsin State Journal, Sept. 28, 1930, describing the original interior finish and arrangement of the store.

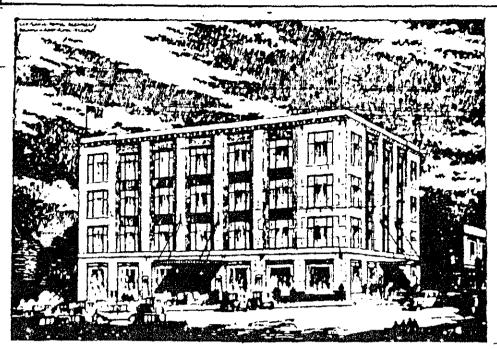
PART IV - PROJECT INFORMATION

Prepared by:

Katherine Hundt Rankin Preservation Planner City of Madison, Department of Planning and Development April, 1985

This project was prepared in compliance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the City and madison and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as part of an Urban Development Action Grant Application for the redevelopment of parts of Block 90.

New Store Arranged for Utmost Convenience



MANCHESTER'S DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING

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THE NEW MANCHESTER STORE

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